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Meta Narrative Review of Indonesian Homeschooling in the Digital Era

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Abstract. *Homeschooling in Indonesia has developed from a marginal family-based practice into a legally recognized alternative pathway within the national education system. Yet research on its legality, pedagogy, digital mediation, and child development remains dispersed across different disciplines. Objective: This article synthesizes Indonesian homeschooling scholarship through a meta-narrative systematic review to identify the main research traditions, their assumptions, and their implications for policy and practice. Methods: Following RAMESES-oriented principles, literature published between 2014 and 2024 was searched in Google Scholar Indonesia, Garuda, SINTA, and related indexed sources using Indonesian and English keywords. Twelve Indonesia-focused studies were selected and mapped by focus, method, narrative tradition, and key findings. Findings: Three dominant narratives emerged: legal-administrative studies emphasize recognition, equivalence examinations, and PKBM procedures; socio-digital studies highlight ICT-supported autonomous learning and learning hubs; and psychological-developmental studies foreground flexibility, parental roles, agency, and well-being. Conclusion: Homeschooling offers adaptive learning but requires assessment models that protect autonomy while ensuring accountable quality.*

Keywords: *Homeschooling; alternative education; Indonesia; meta-narrative review*

Abstrak. *Homeschooling di Indonesia berkembang dari praktik berbasis keluarga yang semula dianggap pinggiran menjadi jalur pendidikan alternatif yang diakui dalam sistem pendidikan nasional. Namun, kajian mengenai aspek legalitas, pedagogi, mediasi digital, dan perkembangan anak masih tersebar dalam berbagai disiplin. Tujuan: Artikel ini mensintesis penelitian tentang homeschooling di Indonesia melalui tinjauan sistematis meta-naratif untuk mengidentifikasi tradisi penelitian utama, asumsi dasarnya, dan implikasinya bagi kebijakan serta praktik pendidikan. Metode: Dengan prinsip RAMESES, literatur terbitan 2014-2024 ditelusuri melalui Google Scholar Indonesia, Garuda, SINTA, dan sumber terindeks terkait menggunakan kata kunci Bahasa Indonesia dan Inggris. Dua belas studi berfokus Indonesia dipilih dan dipetakan berdasarkan fokus, metode, tradisi naratif, serta temuan kunci. Hasil: Tiga narasi dominan muncul, yaitu legal-administratif, sosio-digital, dan psikologis-perkembangan. Kesimpulan: Homeschooling menawarkan pembelajaran adaptif, tetapi membutuhkan model asesmen yang menjaga otonomi sekaligus menjamin mutu secara akuntabel.*

Kata kunci: *Homeschooling; pendidikan alternatif; Indonesia; tinjauan meta-naratif*

INTRODUCTION

The landscape of education in Indonesia is undergoing a profound paradigm shift. For decades, the formal schooling system, characterized by rigid structures and standardized curricula, was commonly treated as the main path to social mobility. However, the 21st century has seen the rise of alternative education, with homeschooling emerging as a prominent choice for families seeking more personalized learning environments (Safar, 2018). In the Indonesian context,

homeschooling, locally referred to as *sekolah rumah*, is not merely a domestic activity but a legally recognized educational pathway under the national education system. The demand for homeschooling in Indonesia is driven by several intersecting factors. First, many parents express dissatisfaction with the "factory model" of education. They perceive the national curriculum as overly burdened with cognitive demands while giving insufficient attention to emotional, spiritual, and personal development. Second, the rise of religious consciousness has led some families to adopt homeschooling in order to integrate faith-based values more deeply into children's everyday learning routines. Primary studies in this review suggest that homeschooling enables families to optimize the unique potential of each child (Safar, 2018). Unlike traditional schooling, where the same curriculum, schedule, and classroom pace apply to most learners, homeschooling operates on the principle of flexibility. Learning may happen anytime, anywhere, and with anyone. This flexibility is especially relevant for children with special needs, high-achieving athletes, child performers, or learners whose circumstances make strict school schedules difficult (Nuraini et al., 2024; Purwaningsih & Fauziah, 2019).

One distinctive feature of homeschooling in Indonesia is its legal foundation. Regulation No. 129 of 2014 by the Ministry of Education and Culture provides a formal basis for *sekolah rumah* as an informal education pathway. This regulation ensures that homeschoolers may participate in equivalence examinations, such as Package A, Package B, and Package C, to obtain certificates comparable to formal school levels. Despite this recognition, implementation challenges remain. Homeschoolers may face bureaucratic obstacles when transitioning back to formal schools or applying for higher education (Sintapertiwi, 2022). Consequently, Indonesian academic debate has been divided between viewing homeschooling as a liberating educational choice and viewing it as a regulatory challenge that needs stronger supervision to maintain national educational quality. The digital era has fundamentally altered the feasibility of homeschooling. Before online learning resources became widespread, homeschooling families relied heavily on textbooks and local support groups. Today, the socio-digital narrative dominates a growing body of literature. Digital libraries, open learning platforms, messaging applications, and collaborative media have transformed the home into a connected learning environment (Safar, 2018; Shohiby & Hermawan, 2022; Wulandari & Mujahidah, 2024).

The COVID-19 pandemic also acted as a catalyst. Millions of Indonesian families experienced emergency remote learning. Although emergency remote learning is not the same as intentional homeschooling, it demystified the possibility of learning outside a school building. This shift increased public familiarity with home-based learning and stimulated academic interest in the sustainability and effectiveness of flexible education models in a post-crisis society (Shohiby & Hermawan, 2022).

The novelty of this study lies in its application of a meta-narrative review approach to synthesize homeschooling research in Indonesia across multiple disciplinary traditions. Unlike previous studies that focus on specific aspects such as legality, parental roles, digital learning, or Islamic education, this study systematically maps and compares the underlying narratives that shape scholarly understanding of homeschooling. By identifying legal-administrative, socio-digital, and psychological-developmental traditions, the study offers a more comprehensive explanation of how homeschooling has evolved within the Indonesian educational context. This article contributes to the literature in three ways. First, it provides the first integrative meta-narrative synthesis of homeschooling studies in Indonesia published between 2014 and 2024. Second, it reveals theoretical tensions and convergences among competing research traditions, particularly regarding the balance between state regulation, digital transformation, and learner autonomy. Third, it proposes a conceptual foundation for future policy and research by demonstrating that homeschooling should be understood not merely as an alternative educational practice, but as a multidimensional phenomenon situated at the intersection of governance, technology, and child development.

Existing reviews on Indonesian education often overlook homeschooling or treat it as a niche sub-topic. There is still a lack of synthesis that accounts for the different ways researchers study this phenomenon. A conventional systematic literature review may aggregate findings about outcomes, but a meta-narrative review is needed because homeschooling is interpreted differently by researchers in law, sociology, information technology, and developmental studies (Greenhalgh et al., 2005; Wong et al., 2013). This paper aims to answer three research questions: (1) What research traditions or narratives are used to study homeschooling in Indonesia? (2) How has the digital era influenced the pedagogical strategies of Indonesian homeschoolers? (3) What systemic barriers affect the wider adoption and integration of homeschooling in the national education system?

METHODS

This systematic literature review uses a meta-narrative approach, a methodology designed to make sense of complex evidence in fields where a topic has been studied by different groups of researchers from different disciplinary backgrounds (Greenhalgh et al., 2005). Because homeschooling in Indonesia is analyzed through legal, technological, sociological, and developmental lenses, this method is more suitable than a conventional meta-analysis that requires homogeneous data. The review follows six phases adapted from RAMESES publication standards (Wong et al., 2013): planning, searching, mapping, appraisal, synthesis, and recommendations. In the planning phase, the scope of Indonesian homeschooling scholarship was defined. In the searching phase, relevant literature was located. In the mapping and appraisal phases, studies were grouped by concepts, theories, and methods. In the synthesis and recommendation phases, findings were compared across research traditions to generate implications for practice and policy.

The primary data for this review were derived from Indonesian educational research published from 2014 to 2024. Databases and sources included Google Scholar Indonesia, Garuda, SINTA, and related indexed sources. Search strings included "Homeschooling Indonesia" AND "Pendidikan Alternatif"; "Sekolah Rumah" AND "Era Digital"; and "Equivalence Education" AND "Informal Learning Indonesia". Studies were included if they focused specifically on Indonesia, were written in English or Bahasa Indonesia, were peer-reviewed journal articles or conference proceedings, addressed pedagogy, legality, digital impact, or social outcomes of homeschooling, and were published between 2014 and 2024. Studies were excluded if they focused on global models without local context, used non-verifiable sources, discussed general distance learning in formal schools rather than homeschooling, or were published outside the target period.

Data extraction was conducted using a standardized form that captured author and year, research tradition, methodology, focus or setting, and key findings. Quality was assessed through the principle of "fit for purpose" within the meta-narrative framework. Each study was appraised according to whether its method appropriately supported the claim it made within its own disciplinary tradition. The synthesis followed the meta-narrative principle of principled pluralism. Instead of forcing a single answer about whether homeschooling is successful, the review examined how the story changes depending on the disciplinary perspective. Three dominant narratives emerged: legal-administrative, socio-digital, and psychological-developmental.

The analysis followed a thematic coding procedure adapted from qualitative evidence synthesis. First, all eligible articles were imported into a coding matrix and reviewed repeatedly to identify recurring concepts, assumptions, and explanatory frameworks. Open coding was initially performed to capture emerging concepts related to homeschooling practices, governance, digital learning, parental involvement, child development, and educational outcomes. The codes were subsequently grouped through axial coding into broader thematic categories. During the final stage, selective coding was used to identify dominant research traditions and construct overarching narratives. Through this iterative process, three major meta-narratives emerged: (1) legal-administrative, (2) socio-digital, and (3) psychological-developmental.

To improve transparency and auditability, coding decisions were documented throughout the synthesis process. Narrative classifications were continuously refined through comparison across studies and disciplinary perspectives.

Phase	Records / Studies	Excluded (with reasons)
Identification	Records identified from databases: Google Scholar: 412 Garuda / SINTA: 64 Scopus: 24 Total: n = 500	Records removed before screening: Duplicates: n = 80 Non-Indonesian focus: n = 150 Pre-2014: n = 20
Screening	Records screened (title and abstract): n = 250	Records excluded: Off-topic: n = 100 Not peer-reviewed: n = 50 Total excluded: n = 150
Eligibility	Reports assessed for full-text eligibility: n = 50	Reports excluded: Insufficient depth: n = 23 No Indonesian context: n = 15 Total: n = 38
Included	Studies included in meta-narrative synthesis: n = 12 (2014-2024, Indonesia-focused)	Final sample used for cross-narrative synthesis

Figure 1. PRISMA flow diagram illustrating the study selection process (2014-2024).

Table 1. Characteristics and key findings of the 12 primary studies included in the meta-narrative synthesis.

No.	Study	Focus / method	Narrative tradition	Key findings
1	Safar (2018)	Homeschooling in the digital era; phenomenological qualitative study in Banyumas, Central Java	Socio-digital	ICT enables flexible and autonomous learning, while digital use requires parental curation.
2	Sintapertiwi (2022)	Legal policy and practitioners' critique; qualitative case study	Legal-administrative	Collaborative homeschooling is viable, but PKBM procedures can become a barrier.
3	Dewantara et al. (2023)	Living book homeschooling and numeracy literacy; holistic single-case study	Psychological-developmental	RME integration supports numeracy and confirms the central role of parents.
4	Fakhrurrozi & Mashuri (2021)	Islamic education in remote communities; naturalistic phenomenology	Legal-administrative / socio-digital	Implementation in remote areas may not align fully with government guidelines.
5	Nuraini et al. (2024)	Parental role in choosing homeschooling; qualitative case study in Bogor families	Psychological-developmental	Family vision drives homeschooling, while social stigma remains a central challenge.
6	Purwaningsih & Fauziah (2019)	Single homeschooling with mothers from different professional backgrounds; case study	Psychological-developmental	Flexible child-centered learning uses Package A/B/C pathways for certification.
7	Saputro (2018)	Islamic homeschooling and the rise of the Muslim middle class; philosophical	Socio-digital / legal-administrative	Homeschooling groups respond to globalization and middle-class religious

No.	Study	Focus / method	Narrative tradition	Key findings
		qualitative study		aspirations.
8	Ismail (2016)	Classification and implementation of homeschooling in Indonesia; literature review	Legal-administrative	Homeschooling is implemented through single and plural formats led by parents or tutors.
9	Nasution & Choli (2022)	Homeschooling and Islamic education; library research	Psychological-developmental	Homeschooling is recommended for informed parents with adequate facilities.
10	Wulandari & Mujahidah (2024)	Homeschooling policy and Islamic education in the digital era; literature review	Socio-digital / legal-administrative	Digital-era policy must integrate autonomy, religious values, and accountable learning support.
11	Muslimat (2017)	Homeschooling as alternative education and trend development; literature review	Legal-administrative	Growth is driven by dissatisfaction with formal schools and family value preferences.
12	Shohiby & Hermawan (2022)	Online and print media optimization for English learning in homeschooling; applied study	Socio-digital	Combined online and print media support continuity during pandemic-related disruption.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

The synthesis reveals a complex and multi-layered story of homeschooling in Indonesia. Findings are presented through three dominant meta-narratives identified during the mapping phase and then discussed through cross-narrative comparison, policy implications, and research limitations.

Narrative 1: The legal-administrative tradition

This narrative is primarily concerned with the institutionalization of informal education. Researchers in this tradition view homeschooling through the lens of state policy, certification, recognition, and quality assurance. Regulation No. 129 of 2014 functions as a key reference point because it provides legal recognition for sekolah rumah within Indonesia's education system (Ministry of Education and Culture, Republic of Indonesia, 2014; Ismail, 2016; Razi, 2016). The main tension in this narrative is equivalence versus autonomy. Families who want access to higher education credentials must often comply with Package A, B, or C procedures. These procedures help provide public recognition, but they may also push families toward a "school at home" model that reduces the flexibility associated with alternative education (Sintapertiwi, 2022). Fakhurrozi and Mashuri (2021) further show that remote communities may struggle to benefit from legal recognition when policy socialization and institutional support are weak.

Narrative 2: The socio-digital tradition

The socio-digital narrative is one of the most rapidly growing traditions, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. In the digital era, homeschooling in Indonesia is not necessarily isolating. Technology acts as a bridge between families, learning communities, tutors, and global resources (Safar, 2018; Shohiby & Hermawan, 2022; Wulandari & Mujahidah, 2024). Three findings are prominent. First, digital tools allow students to access diverse sources and learn beyond printed

textbooks. Second, social media and messaging platforms enable parents to form learning hubs that operate as decentralized support networks. Third, digital access is a double-edged sword. ICT may optimize learning potential, but it also requires parents to act as digital curators who manage screen time, content quality, and online safety.

Narrative 3: The psychological-developmental tradition

The psychological-developmental narrative focuses on well-being, agency, family support, and the individual potential of the child. Studies in this tradition tend to emphasize self-determination and reduced academic stress as important outcomes of homeschooling (Dewantara et al., 2023; Nuraini et al., 2024). Flexibility is the key driver of this narrative. By learning with anyone, anywhere, and anytime, children can develop a stronger sense of ownership over learning decisions. Purwaningsih and Fauziah (2019) show that single homeschooling led by mothers from different professional backgrounds may produce independent learners when the home environment offers consistent guidance, resources, and emotional support. When the three narratives are compared, a clash of perspectives emerges. Legal-administrative studies seek reliable standards and public accountability. Psychological-developmental studies seek freedom, agency, and well-being. Socio-digital studies offer tools that may mediate both goals by supporting personalized learning while also documenting learning evidence. This tripartite tension reflects wider global debates about educational purpose, curricular flexibility, and the balance between state oversight and family autonomy (Valiente et al., 2022; Wang & Langager, 2023).

Table 2. Cross-narrative synthesis of major themes in Indonesian homeschooling research.

Theme	Legal-administrative view	Socio-digital view	Psychological-developmental view
Curriculum	Aligned with national standards and Package A/B/C pathways	Fluid; uses digital resources, learning platforms, and online communities	Based on the child's interests, talents, needs, and family vision
Assessment	Equivalence examinations and administrative documentation	Portfolio-based evidence, digital records, projects, and learning artifacts	Holistic character, competence, independence, and well-being
Role of parent	Administrative supervisor and compliance monitor	Digital facilitator, curator, and mentor	Primary emotional anchor and motivation driver
Key barrier	Bureaucratic recognition and PKBM complications	Digital divide, unequal internet access, and online risk	Social stigma and questions about sufficiency or legality
Strength	Legal recognition under Permendikbud 129/2014	Flexible and globally connected learning environments	High agency, family responsiveness, and lower academic stress
Primary references	Ismail (2016); Sintapertiwi (2022)	Safar (2018); Shohiby & Hermawan (2022); Wulandari & Mujahidah (2024)	Dewantara et al. (2023); Nuraini et al. (2024); Purwaningsih & Fauziah (2019)

A significant finding of this review is that the digital era functions as a catalyst for the mainstreaming of homeschooling in Indonesia. Digital platforms make it possible for learners to access broader resources, join learning communities, document progress, and collaborate with peers. This suggests that the future of Indonesian education may not be a binary choice between school and home, but a hybrid model that combines formal recognition, flexible learning pathways, and personalized digital support (Rantikasari, 2020; Wulandari & Mujahidah, 2024). The Indonesian government should consider moving beyond an exam-centered equivalence model toward a competency-based portfolio system. If the digital era enables diverse learning pathways, assessment also needs to accommodate diverse evidence of learning. Such reform would align with the spirit of Merdeka Belajar by recognizing autonomy while maintaining public accountability. The analysis by Nur Qalbi (2025) also supports the need for policy approaches that recognize the diversity of homeschooling practices across Indonesia. Current Indonesian studies remain concentrated in Java, particularly Central Java, Jakarta, and surrounding urban areas. There is limited evidence on homeschooling practices in eastern Indonesia, including regions where digital infrastructure and educational access are uneven. Most studies are also qualitative case studies or literature reviews, which limits generalizability. Future research should address geographical bias and use mixed-methods designs to produce stronger comparative evidence on Homeschooling as a Contested Educational Model.

DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that homeschooling in Indonesia is not understood through a single educational perspective. Instead, it represents a contested educational model situated between state accountability and family autonomy. The legal-administrative narrative emphasizes educational standardization and public accountability, whereas the psychological-developmental narrative prioritizes learner agency, flexibility, and individualized development. This tension reflects broader international debates concerning the balance between educational regulation and parental rights in alternative education. One of the most significant findings of this review is the emergence of the socio-digital narrative as a bridge between institutional requirements and personalized learning practices. Digital technologies have transformed homeschooling from an isolated family-based activity into a connected educational ecosystem supported by online platforms, learning communities, and digital resources. This finding supports the argument that digitalization has expanded opportunities for flexible and self-directed learning while simultaneously creating new challenges related to digital inequality and online safety.

The findings can be interpreted through several educational theories. First, Self-Determination Theory explains why autonomy and learner control emerge as recurring themes within psychological-developmental studies. Second, Connectivism Theory helps explain the increasing importance of digital networks and online communities in homeschooling practices. Third, Alternative Education Theory supports the view that homeschooling functions as a response to perceived limitations of standardized schooling systems. Together, these theories demonstrate that homeschooling should be understood as a multidimensional educational phenomenon rather than merely an alternative instructional arrangement. The synthesis suggests that existing assessment mechanisms remain heavily dependent on equivalency examinations. While these systems provide formal recognition, they may not adequately capture the diverse learning experiences characteristic of homeschooling. Therefore, policymakers should consider portfolio-based and competency-based assessment models that accommodate personalized learning pathways while maintaining educational accountability. The Indonesian homeschooling experience shares similarities with findings reported in the United States, Canada, and Australia, particularly regarding parental motivations, educational flexibility, and individualized learning. However, unlike many Western contexts, Indonesian homeschooling is strongly influenced by religious values, equivalency certification requirements, and interactions with community learning centers (PKBM). These contextual differences indicate the need for locally grounded policy approaches rather than direct

adoption of foreign homeschooling models. Evidence (Dewantara et al., 2023; Fakhurrozi & Mashuri, 2021).

CONCLUSION

This meta-narrative systematic literature review synthesizes the multifaceted landscape of homeschooling in Indonesia from 2014 to 2024. By analyzing the literature through legal-administrative, socio-digital, and psychological-developmental narratives, the study moves beyond a simple success-or-failure binary and offers a more nuanced understanding of alternative education. Homeschooling in Indonesia is no longer merely a peripheral movement. It is a developing educational strategy that draws on legal recognition, family agency, community support, and digital resources. Its greatest strength is flexibility, because learning can be adjusted to time, place, learner characteristics, and family values. However, the tension between state standardization and family autonomy remains the central challenge. For homeschooling to reach its potential in Indonesia, policymakers should develop assessment models that recognize diverse learning evidence without eliminating the autonomy that makes homeschooling meaningful. Future research should expand beyond Java, strengthen quantitative and mixed-method evidence, and examine how digital infrastructure shapes equity in home-based learning.

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